News release

Ontario

VF(C.B.)
Ontario Public Service

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release no.: 85-26
date: November 19, 1985
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LABOUR MINISTER RELEASES OPTIONS PAPER FOR PAY EQUITY IN THE ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

TORONTO -- Ontario Labour Minister William Wrye today released The Options Paper for Pay Equity in the Ontario Public Service. The Options Paper outlines the issues and options and their implications for the public service pay equity initiative.

In a statement to the legislature, the minister said that the paper has been developed from an ongoing process of consultation involving both the employer agencies and the public service unions.

"I think it is fair to say that the openness of our policy development, in terms of our discussion and involvement with the public service unions, is unprecedented. We have shared with them not only our ideas but discussion papers elaborating the issues that we believe need to be addressed in developing the public service program," the minister said.

"We will be meeting with the unions beginning next Monday and then, hopefully, we will move forward to a resolution of outstanding issues and the formulation of a policy proposal. I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that this process can be expedited so that I will be in a position to introduce a bill that is the product of our consultative process."

The minister indicated in his statement that in establishing a separate initiative to address pay equity in the public service, the government recognizes some of the important differences between the private and broader public sectors on the one hand and the public service on the other.

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The minister enumerated the differences between the sectors. These include:

- The wage gap between males and females is narrower in the public service than in the general population.
- The setting within which pay equity must be addressed in the public service is larger and more complex than is typically the case for private sector employers.
- The level of employee coverage by collective bargaining agreements in the Ontario Public Service is much higher than in the private sector.
- While the government is very aware of its obligation to be fiscally responsible, it does not have the same economic constraints as private sector firms operating in an international marketplace.
- Experience with pay equity in other jurisdictions in Canada and elswhere is much more extensive with respect to public sector initiatives.

The Options Paper for Pay Equity in the Ontario Public Service Pay initiative will be circulated to the public service unions that will be affected. Mr. Wrye announced that he intends, along with his officials to meet with representatives of the public service unions Monday Nov. 25th to hear their initial reactions to the options paper.